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Chairperson: Mr. Pérez (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Peru)

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In the absence of Mr. Penke (Latvia), Mr. Pérez (Peru), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 62: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/64/38)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/64/79-E/2009/74; A/64/151, 152, 164, 190 and 342)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/64/218)

1. **Ms. Horsington** (Australia), speaking on behalf of the CANZ group (Australia, Canada and New Zealand), stressed that gender equality was a fundamental human right. Women's full participation in economic, social and political life was a key factor in reducing poverty, enhancing economic growth and democratic governance and increasing the well-being of women, girls and their families. The CANZ group reaffirmed their commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome of Beijing+5, the Cairo Programme of Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women had been recognized in Millennium Development Goal 3, and the empowerment of women in itself was an essential means for achieving all the Millennium Development Goals.

2. Millennium Development Goal 5 on improving maternal health was the goal on which there had been the least progress. She deplored the fact that every year more than 500,000 women died during pregnancy and childbirth, deaths which were in large part preventable. That was a serious human rights issue and she recalled States' commitments made in the Cairo Declaration on Population and Development. The CANZ group welcomed Human Rights Council resolution 11/8 on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights, the increased coordination between donors on funding for maternal health and morbidity, and the positive roles played in that area by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

3. She looked forward to the fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to be undertaken by the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2010 and called on Member States to seize that opportunity to renew their commitment to implementation of the Platform. In the context of the Beijing+15 process, she strongly supported the consolidation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women into a composite entity led by an Under-Secretary-General as proposed in General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence and looked forward to early recruitment of a strong and dynamic candidate.

4. Lastly, despite progress made, full gender equality had not yet been achieved. It was time for Member States to adopt measures to further improve the status of women, in particular their safety, well-being and status in society and for both men and women to work together to achieve gender equality that would be of benefit to everyone.

5. **Mr. Samarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that the Secretary-General's Unite to End Violence against Women campaign and the proposed creation of a consolidated gender entity within the Organization constituted major progress in the Organization's efforts to empower women. Continued violence against women, including sexual violence and female genital mutilation, early marriage and human trafficking, were matters that needed to be addressed urgently. He called for the creation of a global fund and high-level support in that regard.

6. The Constitution of Sri Lanka guaranteed equal rights to men and women, and a Women's Charter that reflected the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had also been promulgated. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment promoted social and economic empowerment programmes for Sri Lankan women. Impressive gains had been made: Sri Lanka was ranked 36th on the Gender Development Index by the United Nations Human Development Report 2009 and 12th on the United Nations Index on Equal Opportunities. Women's life expectancy was 79, and maternal and infant mortality rates were comparable to those of the

developed countries. Increasing numbers of women were entering higher education, and the representation of women in politics, the judiciary and the civil service was increasing. Training and self-employment programmes had been implemented to help women generate income for their families and become entrepreneurs, and credit schemes had been introduced to help rural women. As a result, women comprised 35 per cent of the labour force.

7. He said that 48 per cent of Sri Lankan migrant workers were women, and his delegation considered combating violence against women migrant workers, including especially vulnerable undocumented women workers, to be a priority. Sri Lanka welcomed the United Nations system's efforts to strengthen contractual arrangements, supervise recruitment agencies, conduct information campaigns and encourage Member States to implement relevant legislation. His Government had negotiated bilateral agreements with several countries to ensure the welfare and protection of Sri Lankan migrant workers.

8. His Government had initiated special post-conflict programmes in the north and east of the country to assist women, some of whom had been forcibly recruited combatants, had become single parents or had lost all or some of their children. Women represented more than 50 per cent of the population in centres for the internally displaced; the welfare of women and children was therefore a priority in the conflict recovery process. Sri Lanka was committed to meeting the needs of women affected by the conflict and helping them become involved in peacebuilding within their communities. Counselling centres had, for example, been set up to provide psychosocial support to displaced women and girls.

9. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights was preparing a National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, in particular the rights of women, in keeping with the recommendation made by the Human Rights Council the previous year. His Government would continue its efforts to improve the status of women and mainstream a gender perspective in policies and programmes.

10. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia) said that his Government was committed to gender equality and had made significant strides in the promotion of the rights of women. Thanks to the 1997 National Gender Policy, more than 30 per cent of members of Parliament were women, surpassing the Southern African Development Community (SADC) target. Some 45 per cent of the members of regional government councils were women, and the SADC target of 50 per cent for women parliamentarians by 2015 would certainly be reached.

11. In order to correct inequalities attributable to cultural practices, a number of laws had been enacted to protect the rights of women and other vulnerable groups, including the Married Persons Equality Act, the Affirmative Action Act, the Communal Land Reform Act, the Combating of Rape Act and the Combating of Domestic Violence Act. A central registry for communal land rights had been established in 2007 and showed that, to date, 45 per cent of land rights registered belonged to women, evidence of improvement in the status of women thanks to the reforms undertaken.

12. Violence against women continued to be a concern, with over 11,600 acts of violence reported in 2008 alone. A national gender-based violence database system had been put into place to monitor the situation and assist the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare in implementing focused interventions. That system was being strengthened with the financial assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). His Government was participating in the Secretary-General's Unite to End Violence against Women campaign and in July had launched a media campaign on zero tolerance for gender-based violence, including human trafficking. A report on human trafficking in Namibia would soon be published.

13. Namibia cooperated with regional and international partners to ensure that women enjoyed the same rights as men, and it supported the major relevant instruments and programmes in that field. Furthermore, his Government had ensured that women were well represented in the security forces, as called for in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

14. Despite his country's efforts, such factors as the worsening HIV/AIDS situation, the financial and economic crisis, human trafficking and climate change continued to be obstacles to the advancement of women. Climate change and the food and energy crises in particular had worsened the situation of women in Namibia. Rural areas were especially vulnerable to food insecurity because of low agricultural productivity, low incomes and limited off-farm

employment opportunities. That situation was exacerbated by the low involvement of women in decision-making relating to environmental management. The international community must continue to assist Namibia in its efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change and develop environmental management programmes for women.

15. **Mr. Monterrey Suay** (El Salvador) said that 53 per cent of the population of El Salvador were women. There was consensus in society on the important role that women played in socio-economic development and on the need to improve the status of women as a factor in reducing poverty and child mortality and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Currently as many girls as boys attended primary school, but girls outnumbered boys at the intermediate and higher levels. Despite progress made, however, 18.3 per cent of women and 12.8 per cent of men aged 15 or more were illiterate.

16. In the area of employment, increased technical training had provided women with greater opportunities for better paying administrative and civil service jobs, including positions of authority. Women, nevertheless, continued to make up 80 per cent of domestic workers and 73 per cent of those employed in assembly plants. Men's income was on average 14.92 per cent higher than women's.

17. Much, therefore, remained to be done to ensure women's full enjoyment of their rights and socio-economic development, in particular in such areas as violence against women, employment, participation in politics, human trafficking and migrant workers. His Government intended to implement a strategy focused on three priorities: making gender equality a reality, increasing the national capacity to carry out its international commitments, and strengthening the national infrastructure for the advancement of women.

18. Gender equality was the key to empowering women, which was itself essential for sustainable development and the strengthening of democracy. National and international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, many of which were inextricably linked to gender issues, must therefore be redoubled. He commended the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) for its work. The Institute's role should be strengthened, and he looked forward to the appointment of a new Executive Director as soon as possible. The empowerment of women strengthened societies and had positive effects on such areas as education, health and development. His Government remained committed to implementing international agreements aimed at improving the lives of its citizens, both men and women, in the firm belief that social justice was the foundation of democracy, development and poverty eradication.

19. **Ms. Štiglic** (Slovenia) commended the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for its exemplary work and underscored her Government's determination to intensify efforts to empower women, which required commitment on the part of men as well as women. Given the importance of integrating a comprehensive gender perspective into the Organization's work, she welcomed the decision to establish a composite gender entity within the United Nations system.

20. While the United Nations had been a constant ally of women in setting legal standards and devising policies to eliminate discrimination against women, many commitments had not been met by the international community. Protecting women's rights through laws and policies was especially important in the economic downturn. She therefore welcomed the prominence given to women's rights by the Human Rights Council, which reflected a growing will to eliminate gender-based discrimination.

21. Violence against women and girls remained a concern, and she expressed support for the Secretary-General's campaign Unite to End Violence against Women and Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) on sexual violence against women and children in situations of armed conflict. Slovenia likewise encouraged all States to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which identified forms of sexual violence in conflict situations as a crime against humanity and a war crime.

22. Her Government had introduced laws and policy measures to promote equal participation by women in decision-making, yet challenges remained. Every effort, for example, was being made to combat the stereotypes that hindered the advancement of women. In order to address the problem of violence against women, including domestic violence, the new Penal Code, in force since November 2008, defined domestic violence as a separate offence and the Domestic

Violence Prevention Act had been adopted in February 2009. A national programme to prevent domestic violence had been launched in 2009, and awareness-raising and training activities were being developed for all relevant actors with a view to making violence against women socially and morally unacceptable.

23. **Ms. Banzon-Abalos** (Philippines) said that her Government's commitment to the empowerment of women had led to the adoption in August 2009 of a Magna Carta of Women to enshrine in law recognition of the role of women in nation-building and their equal rights with men and to eliminate discrimination against women in all spheres of life. Pursuant to that instrument, mandatory training in human rights and gender sensitivity was provided to Government agents involved in protecting women from violence and women were guaranteed the right to have offenders brought to justice.

24. The situation of the 50 per cent of Philippine migrant workers who were women was of special concern. Many worked in the informal service and domestic sectors and suffered gross human rights violations. Women workers had also been the hardest hit by the current financial and economic crises and were subject to increased violence, especially in so-called free trade or export-processing zones, where they were hired on temporary or insecure contracts. Her delegation would submit a draft resolution on violence against women migrant workers to draw attention to that problem. It welcomed the completion by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of general recommendation No. 26 on women migrant workers and urged all States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to take into account that general recommendation, including in their periodic reports to that Committee.

25. Turning to the issue of gender sensitivity in disaster response, she noted that most of those affected by the typhoon that had struck the Philippines in September 2009 were women and children. Her country thanked the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the international community for their rapid response. Addressing gender needs in disaster situations was not just a matter of protection or a human rights issue but also required increasing the efficiency, quality and sustainability of relief efforts.

26. The United Nations must be made stronger and more efficient if it was to deliver on its programme and financial commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Her delegation, therefore, welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence and would work to ensure the rapid establishment of a composite entity for gender issues within the Organization. That entity should be responsive to the needs of Member States and to women's organizations and provide leadership in marshalling resources for gender initiatives and ensuring that goals were achieved at all levels.

27. **Mr. Pak** Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) stressed the importance of women's issues for the promotion of human rights in general and welcomed discussion of that topic in the context of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. His Government was committed to women's rights; even before the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1948, his country had promulgated the Decree on Gender Equality in 1946. Currently women enjoyed equality in all spheres of public and social life and their situation improved with each passing day. His delegation would continue to actively support the efforts of the international community to promote women's rights.

28. He recalled that, in the first half of the twentieth century, Japan had taken almost 200,000 teenage girls and married women from his and other Asian countries to make them sexual slaves for the Japanese army, violating their human rights and often costing them their lives. Japan had a legal and moral obligation to make an apology and provide compensation for that crime yet unlike other countries still had not done so.

29. Certain Western countries had described as criminal the use by Japan of "comfort women" and even the parliament of its closest ally had urged the adoption of an international convention to define that crime as a crime against humanity and punish those involved. He urged Japan to follow the example of other countries and make a sincere apology and compensate for its past actions.

30. **Mr. Nhleko** (Swaziland) said that his Government was committed to meeting its international commitments and empowering women at all levels of society. It was a party to most regional and subregional instruments, including the Southern

African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. Its 25-year National Development Strategy of 1997, called Vision 2022, provided a comprehensive socio-economic policy framework that included gender equality. The Gender Coordination Unit of the Ministry of Home Affairs had been transferred to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in order to strengthen gender mainstreaming.

31. National development would not be possible without strengthening the situation of rural women, but rural women were disproportionately affected by the current economic, food and energy crises and climate change. In an effort to assist them his Government had implemented such programmes as the Gone Rural handicraft programme to provide women with home-based work and the Swazi Secrets natural products company that observed fair trade and environmental criteria. A number of savings and credit cooperatives also catered to the financial needs of women.

32. He welcomed the Secretary-General's Unite to End Violence against Women and looked forward to reports from stakeholders on progress made. His Government strongly condemned violence against women. The Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Bill currently before Parliament would soon be adopted, and a Sexual Offences Unit had been established to provide comprehensive care for women and child victims. He thanked the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for its support of national action plans to end gender-based violence and halt the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls.

33. His country, which was a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, was committed to promoting the rights of disabled persons, including women, in national, regional and international development efforts. The Constitution recognized their right to respect and human dignity, and his Government would take appropriate steps to ensure that disabled persons achieved their full mental and physical potential.

34. **Mr. Mahtab** (India) said that empowerment of women was one of the most critical and beneficial aspects of social development and promoted the achievement of development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The recent economic crises had disproportionately affected the developing world and women in particular. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/64/190), rural women had been the first to lose their jobs and social security while their caregiving role had increased. International cooperation was necessary to support countries' efforts to address that situation, in particular increased funding for bilateral and multilateral financial assistance programmes for developing countries.

35. Empowering women in all spheres of life had been a priority for India since independence. Programmes in that regard included the National Policy for Empowerment of Women and the 2007-2012 Five-Year Plan, and gender had been made a cross-cutting theme in all development initiatives. The Ministry of Women and Child Development was implementing programmes to encourage employment for women through, for example, microcredit schemes and such support systems as working women's hostels, short stay homes and childcare facilities. One particularly successful scheme was the Swayamsidha self-help scheme, which promoted economically sustainable self-help groups. More than 2.2 million such groups had been created.

36. Women had had full voting rights since independence; 33 per cent of seats in urban and local government were reserved for women, and his Government intended to propose increasing that figure to 50 per cent. A Joint Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women ensured that legislation was gender-sensitive, and most ministries and departments had implemented gender-sensitive budgeting to ensure that gender policies were not abandoned for lack of funds, which also facilitated monitoring of the implementation of those policies.

37. Measures had been adopted to combat violence against women, punish perpetrators, provide care for victims and strengthen the legal system with a view to preventing such crimes. The Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act and the recently launched National Campaign on Prevention of Violence against Women 2009-2015 were powerful tools in the fight against that scourge.

38. Women had been repressed and discriminated against for centuries, even though they performed some of the most socially valuable tasks in the home and the workplace. He reiterated Mahatma Gandhi's call for equal freedom and liberty for women. The international

community must work to take full advantage of women's tremendous energy and potential by giving them their rightful place in society.

39. **Mr. Andanje** (Kenya) stressed the pivotal role of women in social and economic development. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly constituted a comprehensive road map for the empowerment of women.

40. Despite the prolonged drought, the world economic downturn and the effects of the post-election violence in December 2007, measurable progress had been made in Kenya towards providing the legal foundations and institutional architecture necessary for achieving a gender-neutral society. A Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development and a National Commission of Gender and Development had been established, gender officers had been appointed in ministries and State corporations, and a National Policy on Gender and Development had been adopted. His Government's Vision 2030 strategic plan provided for accelerated political, economic and social development, the social aspect of which specifically identified gender concerns with a view to increasing participation by and opportunities for women in political life, business, education and health services.

41. At the political level, a 30 per cent affirmative action policy had been established for women in employment, promotion and training; the Political Parties Act required 30 per cent of office-holders in parties to be women and prohibited registration of any party promoting gender-based propaganda. The Women's Enterprise Fund had been established in 2007 to provide financial assistance to women for business and other economic activities; more than 116,000 women had received assistance from the Fund. Parliament was implementing legislative reforms to modify social and cultural attitudes that hindered women's full participation in society. The Law of Succession Act, for example, granted women the right to inherit property, including land.

42. His Government had reinforced legislation to protect women from gender-based violence. The Sexual Offences Act prohibited and penalized all forms of sexual violence, and the Family Protection Bill currently before Parliament would criminalize domestic violence, which most affected women. The Witness Protection Act would encourage women to report violence or abuse without fear of reprisal, for example by establishing a witness protection programme. His Government was working with civil society stakeholders to change cultural attitudes that condoned the abuse of women's rights.

43. The Marriage Bill and the Matrimonial Property Bill were currently before Parliament and once adopted would further protect women's rights. The national plan of action for the abandonment of female genital mutilation 2008-2012 had been implemented at the national and community levels, and his Government was working with community elders to accelerate the abandonment of that regressive practice. The Second National Health Sector Plan 2005-2010 and Constituency Development Fund, by improving access to water and sanitation, had helped improve maternal and child health, in particular in the rural areas where most women lived. The national HIV/AIDS strategic plan was intended to improve the quality of life of those affected and mitigate the socio-economic effects of that pandemic. Since two thirds of those infected with HIV/AIDS were women, his Government was providing equitable access to antiretroviral treatment and expanding prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS.

44. He welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence and its provisions relating to a new gender architecture. Intergovernmental discussion on that proposal should be accelerated. Lastly, he acknowledged the invaluable work of UNIFEM, UNDP, UNFPA and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in assisting developing countries in promoting women's rights and supporting national efforts to enhance data collection systems.

45. **Ms. Simovich** (Israel) said that women continued to be denied their rights, forced into early marriage, stoned to death or whipped, killed in the name of family honour or at risk of death during pregnancy or childbirth. Gender inequality had proven difficult to eradicate, and she therefore welcomed the initiatives described in the report of the Secretary-General on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/64/151), for example his Unite to End Violence against Women campaign, and capacity-building for the effective implementation of national laws and policies.

46. She was heartened by the adoption of Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) on sexual violence against women and children in situations of armed conflict and looked forward to the early appointment of a Special Representative on that issue. The United Nations had an important role to play in promoting gender equality at the global, regional and country levels, and she strongly supported the creation of a composite gender entity within the Organization, as called for in General Assembly resolution 63/311.

47. Israel had always guaranteed complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants. As a result women held many high offices, for example in politics, or the judiciary, where 50 per cent of judges were women. They played a significant role in scientific research and technology development, and her delegation was especially proud of the recipient of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, Ms. Yonath, the first Israeli woman to be so honoured.

48. In 2007, a law had been enacted requiring all legislation to be gender-sensitive; in 2008, legislation had been passed providing financial incentives for employers to modify their workplaces and working conditions to meet the needs of women and parents. Recently, a new ordinance had come into effect requiring that all national statistics be gender-disaggregated. The Authority for the Advancement of Women had given special attention to Arab women in Israel, who made up 60 per cent of Arab students in higher education. Problems remained however: violence against women persisted and women remained a minority in the Knesset, the Government, the private sector and academia. Israel had been ranked only 56th on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index 2008.

49. In a world of strife, women often provided continuity and sanity. For example the Golda Meir Mount Carmel Training Center, established in 1961 by the Israeli National Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV), had been engaged in training activities with its Palestinian partners for more than a decade. To date, it had organized 18 seminars bringing together groups of 18 Israeli and Palestinian women for intensive dialogue and the forging of friendships. Those seminars might seem like small steps but every step, no matter how small, contributed to confidence-building. Her delegation would continue to work with other States to further the advancement of women and stood ready to share its best practices.

50. **Mr. Vinluan** (Singapore) said that the Singaporean Constitution, which enshrined the principle of equal rights for men and women, served as the basis for regular reviews of national legislation to improve the position of women. The Penal Code had, for example, been amended in order to better protect women and children from domestic violence. His country's accession in 1995 to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women also demonstrated its support for the advancement of women.

51. Singapore's gender empowerment measure rank in the UNDP Human Development Reports had improved in 2007 compared with 2006, reflecting the progress made by women in such areas as education, political representation and economic participation. With regard to education, women's literacy rate had increased significantly between 2000 and 2008, and female students now accounted for more than half the full-time student intake at Singaporean universities.

52. Female representation in Parliament had also improved, while the percentage of managerial, technical and professional positions held by women had risen from 36 per cent in 1997 to 41 per cent in 2008. Under the Tripartite Workgroup on Enhancing Employment Choices for Women, established in 2007, a number of initiatives had been taken to empower women by creating viable work options that harmonized their family and work commitments. Lastly, the income gap between men and women had significantly narrowed over the past decade.

53. **Ms. Grabianowska** (Poland) said that, while her delegation supported the statement made by Sweden on behalf of the European Union, it wished to reiterate its understanding that any reference in that statement to the sexual and reproductive rights of women did not constitute an encouragement of the promotion of abortion.

54. **Mr. Beleffi** (San Marino) said that his delegation strongly supported the Secretary-General's Unite to End Violence against Women campaign and had participated actively in the debate held at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against

humanity, which included the responsibility to protect women and girls from mass rape and mutilation.

55. At the national level, San Marino had implemented the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence and had sponsored a television spot about violence against women. A professionally operated hotline provided women victims of violence with legal, medical and psychological support. Promoting the advancement of women and gender equality was not just a matter of principle but was also essential for economic growth, poverty reduction and development effectiveness.

56. **Ms. Hammad** (Yemen) said that her country had been among the first to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and had recently submitted its seventh periodic report. Numerous amendments had been made to national legislation in compliance with the country's international commitments. Most recently, the minimum age for marriage had been raised to 17. Government agencies were implementing a range of strategies to promote women's rights.

57. Yemen was working to ensure women's participation in decision making. Yemeni women had been remarkably successful in leadership roles: there were women ministers, ambassadors, judges and lawyers. The President's electoral programme had included integrating women in the political, economic and social life of the country. As a part of the ongoing political reform, a female quota of 15 per cent had been determined for Parliament. However, her delegation was concerned at the situation of women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The international community must take action to alleviate their suffering and end the occupation.

58. **Ms. Kavun** (Ukraine), emphasizing that gender equality, gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women were an essential part of the development agenda, said that her Government had adopted and implemented national action plans and legislation based on the major international instruments for the advancement of women and established ministerial bodies covering areas such as equal rights and opportunities, legal expertise on gender issues, the family, demographic development and the prevention of human trafficking. Those and other important steps would be reflected in Ukraine's forthcoming periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, whose improved reporting guidelines and working methods her delegation commended.

59. Violence against women, who represented 95 per cent of the victims of family violence, was considered the main obstacle to gender equality in her country. There were 150 governmental and non-governmental organizations operating in Ukraine to assist victims of violence, and the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports, the body specifically responsible for the prevention of domestic violence, had launched a campaign in Ukraine in connection with the Secretary-General's campaign Unite to End Violence against Women. The goals were to improve the legislative base for combating violence, encourage national recognition of the seriousness of the problem, raise public awareness of violence as a human rights violation and assist the victims while counselling perpetrators of family violence.

60. Among the worst forms of violence against women were sexual exploitation and trafficking. Since young women and girls from Ukraine were regrettably among the millions worldwide subjected to trafficking, the Government had adopted anti-trafficking legislation. Ukraine was deeply concerned over the growing international interconnection of the activities of various criminal organizations, and the close link between human trafficking and drugs, organized crime and terrorism. The multidimensional problem of human trafficking thus required a comprehensive, integrated approach.

61. Welcome steps had been taken by various United Nations bodies to address the issue of trafficking in women and girls, and the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking had also produced a number of useful results. The phenomenon was regional and global and could not be dealt with effectively at the national level. It was particularly critical for the countries involved in different stages of the trafficking cycle to cooperate closely. Ukraine was determined to do its utmost to create a world in which women were healthy, educated and free from violence and were given opportunities in all spheres of life.

62. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his country had always been at the forefront of gender mainstreaming, and was a party to almost all of the relevant international instruments. A National Plan of

Action encompassing 15 Government departments had been established in 1998. Because poverty eradication and the empowerment of women were inextricably linked, the gender dimension was reflected in the country's development planning.

63. Bangladesh had already achieved gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment in accordance with Millennium Development Goal 3. The Government had waived tuition fees for women students. Microcredit programmes had vastly improved the situation of rural women, allowing them to become agents of change. In urban areas, poorer women were increasingly active in both the formal and informal sectors. Women could run for Parliament, where a quota of seats was earmarked for them. They were currently represented in all professions, including decision-making positions and several important ministries.

64. A gender perspective should be integrated into all aspects of the work of the United Nations. He welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence and looked forward to further action in that regard. Bangladesh had promised to provide a Female Formed Police Unit for deployment in peacekeeping missions. At the same time, the Peacebuilding Commission should fully implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

65. There remained a significant gap between global policy and national implementation. He, therefore, urged the developed States to fulfil their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of gross national income to least developed countries by 2010 in accordance with the Brussels Declaration adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

66. **Ms. Sodov** (Mongolia) said that her Government had taken comprehensive action to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Several key policy documents had been approved over the previous decade, and substantial progress had been achieved in their implementation. A law on gender equality had recently been submitted to Parliament for consideration. A National Committee for Gender Equality had been established, and would be chaired by the Prime Minister.

67. However, more needed to be done in order to alleviate poverty, reduce the urban-rural divide, combat violence against women and girls, and increase women's share in decision making. The efforts undertaken thus far included the provision of small low-interest loans and the improvement of health services and capacity-building. Poor women with many dependent children received particular attention. Mongolia would continue its engagement with the issue at international forums.

68. **Mr. Rasuli** (Afghanistan) said that, in the eight years since the signing of the Bonn Agreement, the people and Government of Afghanistan had made progress in education, health and institution-building. Since the collapse of the Taliban, women had returned to work for the Government and female education had resumed. Women participated to an unprecedented degree in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country.

69. The Constitution granted men and women equal rights, and provided that the State would formulate and implement programmes for female education. The National Development Strategy, launched in June 2008, included such benchmarks as the advancement of gender equality, the promotion of female participation in State and non-State activities, the provision of legal privileges for women, and the implementation of a national action plan for the advancement of women by 2010. A large number of women had competed in the most recent elections, and 38 per cent of the new voters had been women. Females accounted for 41 per cent of primary and secondary school pupils, 20 per cent of students enrolled in higher education institutions, and 75 per cent of those enrolled in literacy courses.

70. However, enemies of the people and Government continued to burn down schools, creating an atmosphere of fear and affecting school enrolment. The security situation hampered efforts for social development. The Government had criminalized violence against women and was carrying out a thorough review of cases in cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund for Women. With the help of the international community, the Government was comprehensively addressing each of the issues.

71. **Mr. Méndez** (Argentina) said that the elimination of gender-based violence was a particular priority for his Government. A law to punish and eradicate violence against women, which drew on the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, had been approved

by Parliament in March 2009. A campaign for gender equality and against violence had been launched in 2009 with the cooperation of Government agencies and international and non-governmental organizations. Irrespective of their legal status, migrant workers enjoyed full access to the facilities available for victims.

72. In view of its own situation, Argentina was particularly committed to improving the condition of rural women, notably through the Specialized Meeting on Family Agriculture convened by MERCOSUR. At that meeting, the thematic group on gender had worked to ensure that women enjoyed equal access to land and were informed of their rights. The Constitution of Argentina granted full equality to all citizens. The Migration Act extended that principle to male and female immigrants, who had full access to education, justice and other forms of social protection.

73. Argentina welcomed progress towards a new gender architecture better suited to realities on the ground. He hoped that discussions at the current session would lead to the establishment of a composite entity with universal scope and a mechanism for effective governance. That entity should encompass existing mechanisms neither through fragmentation, as had been the case with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), nor through a return to geographic centralization. Instead, it should build on the capacities, knowledge and resources of each constituent part.

74. **Ms. Buhijji** (Bahrain) said that the commitment of the international community to the advancement of women showed that the issue was one of collective responsibility. The reform process in her country had stressed the need to integrate women in all areas of political, economic and social life. Women had gained full political rights, including the right to vote and run for office, and had exercised those rights in the elections of 2002 and 2006. Bahrain had been selected to host the first regional institute for the development and empowerment of women in economic terms. Bahraini women's associations were gaining increasing international recognition.

75. Her country's efforts to adopt and amend legislation reflected a sincere commitment to the advancement of women. The National Strategy for the Advancement of Women would help make women aware of their political rights and encourage them to engage with the decision-making process. The Supreme Council for Women focused on three pillars: decision-making, family stability and economic empowerment.

76. A new Family Code had been enacted in May 2009, stressing the importance of protecting the family unit in accordance with the Islamic sharia. At a seminar on the Family Code, the Prime Minister had highlighted the need for a Family Code acceptable to all parties. The progress achieved by women in Bahrain had been praised by several international organizations. Such achievements did not stem only from the needs of modern societies or from international conventions; they reflected the essence of Arab and Islamic civilization.

77. **Ms. Shawish** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that national legislation, which was grounded in the teachings of the Koran, promoted the equal rights and responsibilities of men and women. The law granted women an equitable inheritance, prohibited them from changing their name after marriage, and entitled them to dispose of their own funds independently and exercise the same professions as men. Women occupied high-level positions in such areas as the judiciary, the army and the police force. Female enrolment in primary and secondary schools for the year 2006-2007 had exceeded that of males.

78. Her country was concerned at the physical and psychological suffering of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation. The report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict concerning human rights in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories (A/HRC/12/48) detailed some of the most recent of those human rights abuses.

79. Her country was also concerned at the situation of women in Africa, where development had been hindered by poverty, hunger, disease and armed conflict. In cooperation with Cuba and Nigeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had established a south-south health-care programme. In 2006, it had launched the Al-Qadhafi project for African youth, women and children, focusing on health, education and professional training. The African Union Decade for Women would also contribute to the advancement of women on the continent. Lastly, she called for international coordination to combat human trafficking

and welcomed the work of the United Nations Development Fund in promoting gender equality.

80. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that his Government continued to empower the women of the nation, having successfully institutionalized gender equality at some levels. The new Constitution enacted in 2008 had removed the traditional gender bar against running for the office of President, and the Government policy of equal pay for equal work had eliminated wage gaps.

81. Yet it remained daunting to achieve de jure and de facto equality for women. Gender mainstreaming as part of development required considerable institutional reinforcement, and the country's extreme lack of capacity and resources had to be overcome. Also, although Maldivian women were among the most emancipated in the Islamic world because of their economic empowerment, the mixed effects of globalization on the country's fragile economy had widened gender disparities, especially in sectors not traditionally open to women because of cultural obstacles. Furthermore, economic and traditional social constraints kept women from participating in public life generally.

82. At the community level, action had been taken to promote equal treatment, protection against violence, economic security and a work/family balance. Nevertheless, the Maldives had begun experiencing the negative effects of extremism: the marriage of underage girls was an emerging issue and was impeding the Government's goals for the advancement of women. In compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Government was focusing on two very crucial goals: the repeal of discriminatory legislation, and a reform of the justice system to give women equal access. International technical cooperation was needed, however, to thus modernize the country's legal system.

83. The global financial crisis had set back small developing States such as the Maldives in unimaginable ways as they sought to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goal 3 with its impact on women. A concerted effort to reform the global economy was needed. The Maldives welcomed the decision by the General Assembly to set up a composite entity for the protection of the rights of women, which would institute a more focused, coordinated approach.

84. **Mr. Cuello Camilo** (Dominican Republic) said that his country was enacting strategic plans to combat HIV/AIDS, maternal mortality and teenage pregnancy. Over the previous 15 years, the Dominican Republic had built up a proud record of struggling for gender equality. Since 1983, it had hosted and supported the headquarters of INSTRAW, which played a fundamental role in promoting the advancement of women and deserved to be strengthened and consolidated. The Institute continued to make a vital contribution to the issue of gender in relation to migration and development, governance and political participation, and peace and security. It had always been intended that the headquarters of INSTRAW would be located in a developing country. Shifting its training and research functions to a developed country would be a distortion of that original mandate.

85. General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence had strongly supported the consolidation of the four institutional arrangements for the promotion of gender equality into a composite entity. It remained to determine the functions and mandate of that entity. His country was confident that the entity that emerged would be stronger and would preserve and strengthen the mandates of each of its four constituent parts. The specific and unique research and training role of INSTRAW should be maintained as a fundamental instrument for the advancement of women, in particular in the developing world. He trusted that that work would continue to be based in the Dominican Republic, thereby ensuring equitable geographic distribution and the efficient allocation of scarce resources.

86. **Mr. Olhaye** (Djibouti) said that, despite the progress of the previous half century, women continued to be disproportionately affected by hunger, poverty and disasters. They often suffered unspeakable sexual, physical, mental and emotional violence. He was disturbed at the increasing reports that a number of peacekeepers, who had been sent to restore law and order and eliminate crime, had been responsible for such criminal behaviour. There was an urgent need to adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards violence against women perpetrated by United Nations peacekeepers.

87. In order to eliminate gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict, deeply ingrained stereotypes must be changed. Investment in women and girls had a multiplier effect on production and was central to the achievement of the Millennium

Development Goals. Policies promoting decent work and full employment should include specific measures to empower women, removing structural barriers and promoting equal pay for work of equal value. He welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence, which supported the establishment of a composite entity to tackle gender issues, and of Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), which requested the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General in order to address sexual violence in armed conflict. The United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women was also in need of support.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

88. **Mr. Okuda** (Japan), said that the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had given the impression that Japan refused to acknowledge or apologize for its past. That was untrue. On 4 August 1993, the Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan had extended sincere apologies and expressed remorse regarding the issue of "comfort women". In the Pyongyang Declaration signed by the Heads of Government of the two countries in 2002, Japan had acknowledged the tremendous damage and suffering caused by its colonial rule, and expressed deep remorse and a heartfelt apology.

89. Japan had conducted talks with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to settle the issue with a view to establishing diplomatic relations. At that very session of the General Assembly, the Prime Minister of Japan had expressed his intention to normalize relations through the comprehensive resolution of all outstanding issues between the two countries. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must take tangible steps to advance such talks.

90. **Mr. Pak** Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that Japan had expressed different points of view on the question of "comfort women". On 4 March 2007, the Prime Minister of Japan at the time had recklessly remarked that there was no evidence for the recruitment of "comfort women". On 25 March 2007, the then Deputy Cabinet Minister had stated that there had been no "comfort women", but only prostitutes sold by their parents. On 23 July 2009, during the consideration of the sixth periodic report of Japan in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/SR.890), the representative of that country had stated that the issue of "comfort women" had been legally settled. Such an irresponsible remark rubbed salt into the wounds of the victims. Japan wished to deny its past and take its place in the military and political arena. Nobody could be certain that its shameful actions would not be repeated. For its own sake, Japan should face up to its past and make amends.

91. **Mr. Okuda** (Japan) said that, for the previous 60 years, his country had been working to promote peace, prosperity and human rights. The former Prime Minister had repeatedly confirmed that he endorsed the position expressed by the Chief Cabinet Secretary on 4 August 1993.

92. Although no country had an impeccable record, it was inappropriate for Japan to be criticized by a State that had no respect whatsoever for human rights. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea could not justify its continuing human rights violations by hiding behind the past. In particular, that country must immediately ensure the right to food, refrain from punishing citizens who returned to that country, and put an end to public executions.

93. **Mr. Pak** Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that Japan had indeed apologized in words. He wondered, however, when Japan would make a political decision to make amends for its criminal past and become a member of the international community with clean hands and a clean conscience.

94. **Mr. Sammis** (United States of America), responding to a statement made that morning by the representative of Cuba, said that his delegation regretted the inaccurate and inappropriate use of the word "genocide", which diminished the suffering of genocide victims. United States sanctions did indeed restrict the trade of United States companies and individuals with Cuba. However, the United States was also the largest provider of food to Cuba: in 2008, its agricultural sales to Cuba had amounted to some $717 million. The United States was Cuba's fifth-largest trading partner, and a significant exporter of medicine and medical equipment to that country. The people of the United States was the largest source of humanitarian aid to Cuba.

95. His country had taken several measures to enable Cuban citizens on the island to have access to much-needed resources. Steps had been taken to facilitate family travel, lift limits on family remittances, and

promote the free flow of information to and from Cuba. The United States had resumed bilateral discussions on migration, and had initiated talks to establish direct postal services. The United States did not discuss individual visa cases. However, over 120 visas had been issued to persons visiting the jailed Cuban intelligence operatives. All visa applications were processed strictly in accordance with the Immigration and Nationality Act.

96. **Ms. Pérez Álvarez** (Cuba), said that the representative of the United States had still not explained why the State Department had never granted Ms. Pérez O'Connor a visa. The United States administration continued to allege that she posed a security threat. At the same time, the international terrorist Luis Posada Carriles was allowed to freely walk the streets of Miami. Mr. Posada Carriles had openly confessed to planning the bombing of a Cubana Airlines flight, which had resulted in 73 deaths, and the bombing of a series of Cuban hotels in 1997. He had also plotted to assassinate the former President Fidel Castro during a visit to Panama.

97. The unilateral embargo against Cuba remained in effect and constituted an act of aggression and genocide under the Geneva Conventions. If the President of the United States was truly open to lifting the embargo, his administration could begin by ending such practices as restricting the purchase of United States products; freezing and confiscating transfers from third countries in United States dollars; denying access to the United States for third-country vessels that had transited in Cuba; and prosecuting financial entities that traded with Cuba.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.